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Candlemas Ritual

Mysts of Annwfn Book of Shadows

Anon

The following ritual calls for the participation of eight people, and is best performed at a large gathering. The participants include: The Maiden Goddess, the Young Lord, the High Priestess, the High Priest, and the four Watchtowers.

Specific items needed for this ritual are: a Crystal Ball, a cross of rushes, a mat, a basket, a phallic wand, a sprig of evergreen, pieces of paper, cakes, wine, and basic Altar and ritual equipment. All participants shall write upon the paper things and qualities they wish to gain during the coming season, and then place them in the basket prior to ritual.

Candlemas is the festival of the Flame, and is best performed at night. This is Brighid's celebration. Winter is bade farewell, and as Spring approaches, it's a time to think of love.

All members of the ritual enter the Circle except for the Maiden. She should be wearing white, and is adorned with a garland of flowers in her hair. She stands out of sight, awaiting her cue. All attendants of the ritual should line the outer ring of the Circle, leaving a walkway into it. The Young Lord is to position himself among the attendants.

The High Priest starts the ritual by saying:

The young Sun King now begins to feel the first stirring of desire for the Lady. The Goddess patiently awaits her future lover. The Rites of Spring are near, and the year is in its waxing phase. The Sun's presence is ever-more increasing and the darkness runs and hides.

The Invocation of the Four Quarters comes next, starting with the East:

> We welcome the Guardians of the East. Your breath of life is sacred, and greetings to the lovely Fand, the Pearl of Beauty, and gracious Olwen, the White Lady of the Day. Your presence is most welcome at this Festival of Imbolc!

South:

> We welcome the Lords of the South. Your warmth flows through us all, and greetings to the Honored Lady Brighid, and to beautiful Branwen, the White Bosomed One. Your presence is most welcome at this Festival of Oemlic!

West:

> We welcome the Holy Ones of the West. Your moisture is refreshing and precious to life, and greetings to our Queen Arianrhod of The Silver Wheel, and sweet Aine of the Wisps. Your presence is most welcome at this Festival of Lights!

North:

> We welcome the Watchers of the North. Your power and wisdom is ours, and greetings to the Wise Cerridwen of Lake Tegid, and to the desirable Rhiannon of the Netherworld. Your presence is most welcome at this Festival of Candlemas!

The High Priest continues:

> From now to Beltane, is the pathway less dark. Thus, shall the journey be made through to Beltane, renewed in strength and happy in love.

The High Priestess now turns slowly, addressing those assembled. As she speaks, the Maiden walks slowly into view down the processional towards the Circle, until she stands at the Northern Gateway. She is holding the Cross of Rushes.

The High Priestess says:

> Long Winter is now passing away and the buds will soon swell on the Apple tree bough. The Earth gladly receives the plow in preparation for the celebration of life. For the Queen and the King will begin to wear the garden's green and will speak in a single voice!

The High Priest acknowledges the physical presence of the Maiden, and exclaims:

> Behold!!! Brighid has come! Brighid is welcome!

The Maiden enters the Circle and lays the Cross on a mat situated just South of the Altar. She says:

> Greetings to you, not only from myself, but from the Mother and the Crone as well. All seasons of the Earth are important and must have their course...but now, I weary of Winter, and I long for the greenness of Spring, and all that it encompasses. I strongly desire the companionship of my Lover-to be!

She searches the Circle of people and draws him out. She kneels before him and invokes the God Lugh:

> Lord of Death, Resurrection, Life, and the Giver of Life! Lord who is within us, whose name is Mystery of Mysteries! Descend we pray thee, upon thy servant and Priest!

Lugh, after indwelling the Priest, now moves over to the Altar, picks up the Phallic Wand, and places it on Brighid's Bed (the mat). The Maiden addresses the God:

> I grow weary of the darkness. Let's join to hurry Winter along its way so we can enjoy the pleasures that await us! (She motions to the mat).

The God starts the Balefire in the South, and while doing this, the Maiden sweeps the Circle three times while everyone chants:

> Return, return, return, return

> The earth, the water, the fire, and the air.

At an appropriate time, the singing comes to an end and the God says:

> The Key to unlocking Winter's hold is to erase its memories!

He now holds up a sprig of evergreen and hands it to the Maiden Goddess. She tosses it into the Balefire. She then picks up a basket full of everyone's desires and wishes for the coming season, and says:

> Behold! In my hands I carry Hopes and Wishes for the coming seasons. I place them in this fire and as quickly as the memories of Winter fade, let the Hopes and Wishes just as quickly take root!

She tosses them into the Balefire, and Lugh now says:

> My dear Lady and Lover-to-be, do us great honor by gazing into the Crystal and give your people words they can hold as their own!

Brighid picks up the Crystal Ball and holds it between her hands. She gazes into it momentarily before saying:

> All the gods are one God, and the goddesses, one Goddess, and there is but one Initiator. And to every man, his own Truth, and the God within.

Upon hearing this, he smiles and says:

> Come! Let's feast and make merry on this great occasion!

The High Priestess steps in front of the altar and raises the water and Wine. She faces North and says:

> In celebration of Brighid's Day, we open the Moongate and let the Westwind blow! We bring Water, life's elixir, to refresh ourselves. We bring the Fruit of the Vine, the drink of the gods! Let us sip and enjoy. Hail to fair Brighid!

The High Priestess now picks up the plate of cakes and says:

> Upon this plate are gifts from Erin! Farrels for us to enjoy! Let us eat and remember the Gods. These are holy Sabbat Cakes. They bring us sustenance and fill the hunger. Blessed Be Brighid's Feast! Let us dance in joy and mirth!

The High Priestess now raises the honey as all say:

> Here is the Sweet Nectar! Sacred to the Gods!

All now partake of the Cakes and Wine. Sing songs, dance, and do anything else that feels appropriate. (Brighid's Day is a traditional time for initiations). When the celebration is winding down, the God, taking the Maiden Goddess into his arms, declares:

> Now that we all have feasted and made merry, come with me now, our bed of Love awaits us!

The Maiden, protesting lightly, responds:

> Oh! How I've longed for you through the Dark days of Winter! But My Love, though our bed is ready, we still must wait a short while. Our time of Union is not yet upon us, but the Rites of Spring, and of Beltane, are not far off!

The Sun King looks slightly disappointed, but smiles lovingly at her. They embrace and kiss passionately, while everyone starts to sing, "Lady Weave Your Circle Tight." While the song continues, she slowly leaves his arms and exits the Circle. He follows her, not wanting her to leave, but stops at the Circle's edge. She turns and says to him:

> My Heart is with you, and Destiny will bring us back together soon! As the Cup is to the Knife, so am I to you!

She now disappears out of sight, and the singing shall die down. The High Priest now says:

> Even though the Maiden has departed, her presence continues to increase! Light chases away the Darkness, and soon, the Maiden shall reign Supreme! The Winter grows short, and the leaves shall return to the trees! New Life shall spring forth, and New Love along with it! The Wheel turns, and the Young Lord and his Lady shall meet to consummate their Love. So ends this prelude to Spring! May the coming season bring you much joy and happiness!

The Watchtowers are now given their release:

> Farewell to the Watchtowers of the North, and to Rhiannon and Cerridwen. May we depart in love and peace until we gather again.

West:

> Farewell to the Holy Ones of the West, and to Queen Arianrhod and Aine. May we depart in love and peace until me gather again.

South:

> Farewell to the Lords of the South, and to Branwen and the Maiden Brighid. May we depart in love and peace until we gather again.

East:

> Farewell to the Guardians of the East, and to Olwen and Fand. May we depart in love and peace until we gather again.

Everyone:

> Merry meet, and merry part, and merry meet again!

References for inspiration:

- Gwydion Pendderwen
- Dion Fortune

- Janet & Stewart Farrar
- Marion Zimmer Bradley

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